

## Buzz: Doubling Down on Doha | Is state capacity a political choice? | Owen Barder and the House of Lords

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Here are the latest stories that have created a buzz or otherwise caught our attention over the last week.

### Robert Zoellick: Time to “Double Down” on Doha

Speaking to the WTO in Switzerland on the 18<sup>th</sup>, Robert Zoellick [argued](#): “Some want to Declare Doha Dead. Instead, I urge the WTO members to get bolder: Double-Down on Doha. And do so by Thinking Ahead, and Thinking Big.” Whether the WTO will heed his call and breath fresh life into the, what some would argue catatonic, rounds of negotiations that could have a far greater impact on poverty and development than aid, remains to be seen.

### 28 countries have now escaped the poverty trap since 2000

Every July the [World Bank](#) does its annual assessment of poor countries. Low-income countries, according to the Bank, are those with average gross national incomes of less than \$1,005 per person. As of this year, there are only 35 of [these countries](#) remaining, down from 63 in 2000. This is an amazing achievement, however the 35 countries remaining in the Low-income bracket still represent 800 million people, and poverty is still rampant in Middle-income countries. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation [discusses in more detail](#).

### Kenya launches first Open Data initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa

The Kenya Open Data Initiative ([KODI](#)) was launched on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July at a high profile event in Nairobi. The initiative aims to make core government development, demographic, statistical and expenditure data available in an accessible manner. There are currently over 160 datasets on the platform and already there have been some interesting applications of the datasets by a number of organisations (see [Huduma](#), which has already used census and healthcare data to map information and [Virtual Kenya](#), which has built an application to show which Kenyan MP’s refuse to pay taxes).

### Is State Capacity a Political Choice?

Two recent papers, analyzing Bihar and Ethiopia, suggest that this may be the case. Santosh Mathew and Mick Moore (2011), in a [recent paper](#), examine the weak capacity of the State of Bihar in India over the period of 1990-2005. A [paper](#) by Stephen Peterson (2011) on Public Financial Management in Ethiopia over

1996-2010 examines the drivers of successful financial reform. In both cases the authors argue that deliberate and calculated political choices drove weak capacity in Bihar and strong capacity in Ethiopia.

### **Can aid work? Owen Barder's written testimonial submitted to the House of Lords**

In this [written testimony](#), Barder argues that the first step in considering aid effectiveness is to identify the aims of foreign aid. He presents three: sustained economic growth, improved quality of life, and the alleviation of suffering. He argues that aid often has a demonstrated impact on improving lives and alleviating suffering, but its effect on economic growth is ambiguous. He argues that foreign aid, done well, does good, and offers ten recommendations to avoid pitfalls and improve how aid is delivered. These recommendations are:

1. Spend more aid through the multilateral system
2. Make aid more predictable
3. Make aid transparent, accountable and traceable
4. Build the accountability of governments to their parliaments and citizens
5. Focus on results and simplify aid
6. Invest more in global public goods, especially new technologies
7. Focus aid on women and girls and chronic poverty
8. Leverage the private sector
9. Use innovative finance to increase the productivity of aid
10. Learn more and fail safely

### **Resource-rich pacific economies thrive while others lag behind – ADB Report**

The Pacific's resource-rich economies of Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Timor-Leste will continue to expand strongly this year as commodity prices remain firm but growth in the rest of the region is set to remain subdued, according to the ADB's latest [Pacific Economic Monitor](#). Growth in the Pacific is forecast to reach 6.4%, being completely driven by the resource-rich PNG, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste. The remaining 11 Pacific Economies are expected to experience much lower GDP growth, at 1.5% in 2011 and 1.9% in 2012.

### **Improving access to climate financing for the Pacific Islands**

A new [policy brief](#) for the Lowy Institute by Nic Maclellan explores some innovative approaches that could strengthen Pacific access to climate finance and improve outcomes for vulnerable communities in our region. Maclellan argues that Access to climate financing could be improved through seeking special access for small island states in financial mechanisms, establishing programs and structures that improve donor coordination and build the capacity of national institutions, developing national climate trust funds and a Pacific Regional Climate Change fund and, most importantly, implementing more targeted action on the ground to assist the most vulnerable communities with concrete adaptation programs.

### **We value your feedback**

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